

WHAT ABOUT JOB ROTATION?

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Edwards (2005, p. 74), in *Fire Service Personnel Management*, states “job rotation should be required for fire officers, especially as they advance in rank.” Job rotation is often included as a recommended component of professional development and succession plans.

The problem was Belton Emergency Services has no requirement of job rotation for its fire officers.

Descriptive research was utilized to determine the present utilization of job rotation in today’s fire service and how it may be implemented for Belton Emergency Services.

What is job rotation?

How is job rotation being utilized by other organizations?

How are other organizations benefiting from the use of job rotation?

What are the risks and barriers of implementing a job rotation program for Belton Emergency Services?

A literature review was conducted to define job rotation, how it is utilized in organizations, what benefits were derived from the practice and the significant barriers to implementing a program.

Based on information identified through literature review, two surveys were utilized to determine how job rotation is currently utilized in the fire service, what skills are being developed through job rotation, and how job rotation may be utilized in Belton Emergency Services. One instrument surveyed departments in the Kansas City metropolitan area. The second instrument surveyed Belton Emergency Services staff.

The results were that job rotation programs may be formal or informal and that the definition depends on the organizations use.

Many benefits of job rotation were identified.

Lack of employee “buy-in,” socio-economic resistance to shift change, department size, and the potential for lost productivity, are significant barriers to implementation in Belton Emergency Services.

Recommendations of this researcher include additional planning, including the exploration of incentives to overcome resistance to shift change, identify potential losses in productivity and mechanisms for compensation, and the cost/benefit of these issues.

Department size is not a hurdle easily overcome. It may be that the cost/benefit ratio is lower for larger departments. If this obstacle cannot be overcome, other avenues of professional development should receive consideration.

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INTRODUCTION

Edwards (2005, p. 74), in *Fire Service Personnel Management*, states “job rotation should be required for fire officers, especially as they advance in rank.” Job rotation is often included as a recommended component of professional development and succession plans.

The problem is Belton Emergency Services has no requirement of job rotation for its fire officers.

Descriptive research will be utilized to determine the present utilization of job rotation in today’s fire service and how it may be implemented for Belton Emergency Services.

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BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Belton Emergency Services serves a suburban/rural community of about 23,000 people in northern Cass County Missouri. A department of the City of Belton (Belton), a political subdivision of the State of Missouri, Belton Emergency Services serves Belton and Mt. Pleasant Township Fire Protection District. The department consists of one station, 32 full-time uniformed personnel, one part-time person, and one staff person.

Consistent with its mission, services include fire suppression, fire investigation, emergency medical services (EMS), advanced life support (ALS) transport, hazardous material response, plan review, business inspections for fire code compliance, and public education.

Job rotation is included as a component of succession and professional development plans. Edwards (2005, p. 74), in *Fire Service Personnel Management*, states “job rotation should be required for fire officers, especially as they advance in rank.”

This research relates to the course *Executive Leadership* (EL) (National Fire Academy (NFA), 2002). The course text discusses the need to develop oneself as a leader, developing decision-making skills, succession/replacement planning among other leadership skills.

The United States Fire Administrations (USFA) 5-Year operational objectives are to “reduce the loss of life from fire by 15%. By reducing by 25% the loss of life of the age group 14 years old and below, and by reducing by 25% the loss of life of the age group 65 years old and above, and by reducing by 25% the loss of life of firefighters” (USFA, 2004)

Better educated and prepared leaders at every level of the organization will provide better alignment of staff with the mission of Belton Emergency Services which are consistent with the objectives of the USFA.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is job rotation?

Edwards (2005, p. 74) describes job rotation as “the process of switching a person from job to job” which increases an employee’s capability and value to an organization.

Job rotation can be defined as the performance by an employee of a new assignment on a temporary basis for an agreed period of time. Job rotation is position-oriented, with management determining the need for a specific job to be done. An employee selected for job rotation will normally possess the requisite skills and be paid for work-out-of-class (WOC) if the assignment is in a higher salary range than that corresponding to the employee's usual classification (International Labour Organization, 1998, pp. 50).

The Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) describes job rotation as “a career development strategy where an individual temporarily moves laterally into an established or “shadow” position” (HRDC, n.d. a, pp. 1) which “usually require the employee to suspend his or her current job duties” (HRDC, n.d. b, pp. 5) to accept “permanent or temporary appointments to new positions” (HRDC, 1997, p. 12). An employee may complete a series of job rotations, which are “planned to stretch and challenge employees, and to broaden their understanding across different business processes of the organization,” (HRDC, 1997, p. 12).

Two different forms of job rotation are defined by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife:

Developmental Job Rotation: The opportunity for an employee to develop new skills. The employee shall not be expected to initially perform the full range of duties of the position or class, but shall be expected to develop the skills necessary to perform them during the rotation.

Career Enrichment Job Rotation: The opportunity for an employee to use existing skills in a different setting. The employee shall be expected to satisfactorily perform essentially the full range of duties of the assignment from the beginning of the career enrichment job rotation. (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2004, p. 1).

Informal and Formal Training and Development (n.d., pp. 19) refers to job rotation as a more “sophisticated form of cross training... which usually involves extended periods (from one month to six months). With job rotation, the employee's role is of a different nature. He is not considered as trainee, but is responsible over certain job functions, for which he has to prove himself.”

Job rotation is an alternative to job specialization. It is a way to reduce employee boredom and it also facilitates more of an understanding about the organization. Job rotation is moving from one job to another. Jobs can be rotated that are very similar or drastically different. For example, a person who is in charge of accounts receivable could change with a person who is in charge of accounts payable. An employee could work as a marketer for a year and then work as a selling agent for a year” (John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center, n.d., pp. 4).

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) includes job rotation as an administrative control for hazard prevention by significantly limiting “daily exposure to hazards by control or manipulation of the work schedule or work habits” (OSHA, 2003, Chap. III, Section II, Part C3, pp. 4).

The New Zealand public service has different terminology and definitions depending on how job rotation is conducted.

External secondment: a fixed term placement that usually occurs between organisations, with the expectation that the person concerned will return to the parent organisation. This placement can be either into or out of the organisation.

Internal secondment: a fixed term placement that usually occurs between business units, teams or branches, with the expectation that the person concerned will return to the parent business unit, team or branch.

Rotation: a placement within an organisation that is usually permanent. The difference between a secondment and a rotation is the understanding that a secondee will return to the original position. This understanding does not exist for a rotation (State Services Commission, 1999, p. 2).

Job rotation comes in many forms and is useful in many situations. Job rotation is the systematic movement of employees from one job to another. How this movement is accomplished depends on the purpose that you wish to achieve and how dramatic a move you are willing to take (Malinski, 2002, pp. 2).

This influenced the research by identifying that there exist broad definitions and differing terminology for job rotation, which may differ from organization to organization.

How is job rotation being utilized by other organizations?

Eriksson & Ortega (2004, p. 1) tested three theories of why organizations introduce job rotation, “employee learning, employer learning, and employee motivation.”

With employee learning, the theory is “that employees who rotate accumulate more human capital because they are exposed to a wider range of experiences. The more an employee moves, the more he learns” (Eriksson & Ortega, 2004, p. 2).

Under the employer learning theory, “the firm itself learns more about its own employees if it can observe how they perform at different jobs. To find the job that an employee is best at, the employer needs to move the employee around and observe how he performs at each position” (Eriksson & Ortega, 2004, p. 2).

The employee motivation theory states, job rotation “motivates employees who would otherwise become bored and tired of always performing the same tasks” (Eriksson & Ortega, 2004, p. 2).

The results of the study indicated that the “likelihood of job rotation increases with firm size, stronger presence of unions, the proportion of females in the firm’s workforce and the homogeneity with respect to experience of the workforce” (Eriksson & Ortega, 2004, p. 16).

Little support was found for the employee motivation hypothesis. Employee and employer learning received more statistical support.

The Government of Ontario (GOO), Canada utilizes job rotation as a non-monetary incentive to retain and motivate volunteer firefighters (GOO, 1998, pp. 9).

Guardiano, Haarmeyer, & Poole (1992) in *Fire Protection Privatization: A Cost-Effective Approach to Public Safety* found the use of cross training and job rotation to produce a highly integrated and productive organization. They describe cross training firefighters as rescue technicians and rotating duties on a shift-by-shift basis.

Job rotation and new assignments were identified as preferred retention strategies by managers according to the Employee Retention Workgroup (2002, p. 16) of New York.

The *Federation of Public Employees/AFT* (n.d., p.13) report that employees offered opportunities for job rotation “tend to be rejuvenated and have an opportunity to rededicate themselves to the connection with public service.” However, they also report “there is minimal public sector data about the use of job rotation as a retention tool” (AFT, n.d., p. 13).

Rotational assignments as part of an individual development plan (IDP) are utilized by the Social Security Administration (SSA), Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP).

The SESCDP is composed of rotational development assignments, presentations, and core training sessions, which are mandatory for participants. Each SESCDP participant may choose to fulfill the rotational development component by choosing a development activity that targets the participant’s development areas most appropriately. This activity must take place outside of SSA and fall within the allotted training budget (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004, p. 12).

In *Learning and Returning: The Use of Secondments and Rotations in the New Zealand Public Service*, the State Services Commission reported a mix of formal and informal processes and policies for employing rotations. Policies were more formal for career development purposes and less so to meet individual project needs or fill gaps (State Services Commission, 1999).

Rohr (2000, p. 31) and Stone (2001, p. 77) recommended rotation of fire department command officers among department divisions.

Others utilizing job rotation include the Defense Leadership and Management Program to develop civilian leaders to assume broader responsibility for national security issues across the Department of Defense. The Health Care Finance Administration (HCFA) assigns support staff to two, four month, rotational assignments to develop skills to meet entry requirements for professional positions, and Eli Lilly and Company utilizes an informal rotational program for professional development. A study conducted within Eli Lilly's financial division found that persons participating in job rotations experienced more promotions (HRDC, n.d. a, pp. 8).

In one review of management practices in the United States, Cohen, Dickens, & Posen (2001, p. 36) found that the use of job rotation had increased from 15 % in 1987 to 55.5% in 1997. A Global Leadership survey conducted by the US Society for Human Resource Management in 2002 reported 41% of organizations utilized job rotation for leadership development (Campbell-Allen & Welch, 2004, p. 5).

A 1999 study by Cambridge University's Centre for Business Research (CBR) found that 40% of the businesses in the United Kingdom used job rotation and multi-skilling (Kitson & Wilkinson, 1999, p. 4).

In New Zealand, “rotations were used by almost half (44%) of the departments interviewed” (State Services Commission, 1999, p. 14).

How are other organizations benefiting from the use of job rotation?

Eriksson & Ortega (2004, p3) write:

According to Champion, Cheraskin and Stevens (1994), job rotation produces two beneficial effects. First, an employee who rotates accumulates experience more quickly than an employee who does not rotate. Hence job rotation is mentioned as an effective tool for career development. Second, an employee who rotates accumulates experience in more areas than an employee who does not rotate. Hence, if an employee rotates more frequently, it is easier to train him to become a generalist.

Jans & Frazier-Jans (2001, p. 48) report the benefits to the Australian Defence Force, are for officers to gain generalist skills early in their careers in order to provide a pool from which future commanders and policy leaders could be drawn. This makes officers competent in skills that are not necessarily performed in their normal duties making them more responsive when change is necessary. Rotation also contributes to career satisfaction by sharing the “good” and “bad” assignments, and provides the organization the ability to rapidly fill vacancies.

Cosgel & Miceli (1998, p. 3) report that job rotation produces innovation by improving a firm's ability to generate and respond to change. “Process style” innovations are produced because of workers knowledge of the overall relationship among tasks, “allowing workers to apply their knowledge of one task to the improvement of others.”

Rohr (2000, p. 20) reported that job rotation “provides an organizational overview, encourages interdepartmental cooperation, brings fresh viewpoints to otherwise stagnant sections of the organization, and it promotes flexibility.”

Interviewees of the New Zealand Public Service recognized that “an individual’s skills may reasonably be grown for the benefit of the wider Public Service, rather than for the long-term advantage of a single department” (State Services Commission, 1999, p. 11).

Malinski (2002, pp. 9) sums the benefits as “reductions in boredom, work stress, absenteeism, and turnover and an increase in innovation, production, and loyalty.”

Benefits identified by Informal and Formal Training and Development (n.d., pp. 14), job rotation achieves the following:

- Prevents stagnation
- Offers a learning and professional development opportunity
- Improves understanding of the different departments and the company as a whole
- Leads to better coordination and teamwork
- Erases differences, enmity and unhealthy competition
- Increases knowledge, know-how, skills and work performance
- Improves overall motivation
- Leads to the sharing of organizational goals and objectives.

What are the risks and barriers of implementing a job rotation program for Belton Emergency Services?

There are costs associated with job rotation. In the New Zealand Public Service the cost and risk of rotation varied with the type of rotation or secondment experience. Poaching of rotating personnel from the transferring office was a major concern; along with the possibility, the employee would be reluctant to return to their original position after exposure new ideas or responsibilities. The original position may not exist, or managers may have learned to do without the individual rotating. Managers could be reluctant to commit staff that they have

trained. A lack of clarity in expectations could reflect poorly on the employee or the transferring organization. Additional risks included the perceived increased workload on remaining staff, and the time spent bringing a person up to speed (State Services Commission, 1999, p. 15).

Malinski (2002, pp. 10) identified several difficulties with implementation of a job rotation program such as resistance by experienced staff, educating and training staff for new jobs, fitting the skill level of the staff with the job and pay structure, the direct costs of implementation, and exposing untrained staff to hazardous situations in industrial settings. Identification of the specific process, the type of rotation, staff communication, and the length of training and the learning period all must be determined. Differences in skill levels among staff may be significant resulting in additional expense in upgrading staff or loss of productivity for some period.

Malinski (2002, pp. 10) recognized that a unionized environment may restrict job rotation within particular job classifications. Cosgel & Miceli (1998, p. 12) reported, “If a strong labor union negotiates primarily on the basis of wages and disregards (or opposes) other job attributes, then the firm would not be able to offer job rotation.”

“This has to be an effective planned process. Employees must ‘buy’ into the idea, be encouraged to give feedback and make suggestions for improvement” (Informal and Formal Training and Development, n.d., pp. 15).

PROCEDURES

This project began with a literature review of documents pertaining to “job rotation” and “division rotation,” “assignment rotation,” etc. Filters, limiting selections to fire service applications produced limited results. The primary sources of materials involving the fire service

were located at the Learning Resource Center of the National Emergency Training Center (NETC). Internet. Searches of the card catalog of the Mid-Continent Public Library and the available online databases produced results for a variety of other industries, and identified job rotation as a desired component of succession and professional development plans.

According to the literature review, job rotation has many different applications. Therefore departments may utilize job rotation in a large variety of ways.

Based on information identified through literature review, two surveys were utilized to determine how job rotation is currently utilized in the fire service, what skills are being developed through job rotation, and how job rotation may be utilized in Belton Emergency Services.

Departmental Survey

The first survey, developed by the author, targeted local departments in the Kansas City Metropolitan area. The purpose of the survey was multi-fold. First, was to determine the frequency of use of job rotation for succession planning or professional development. Identify the impact department size may have on the frequency of utilization, identify the job classifications and skills impacted by job rotation, and identify the benefits and problems associated with the practice.

The assumptions for this survey were that the targeted participants of the survey were familiar with job rotation, department policies and objectives governing the program, and could provide judgment on the benefits and problems associated with it. Second, the participants understood the survey questions. This survey (Appendix A) was sent by email to 16 potential respondents.

The limitations of the survey were that the survey was limited to the Kansas City metropolitan area involving a limited number of departments. The demographical make up of the departments would range from metro size departments with several hundred members to smaller suburban combination departments.

Staff Survey

Fire department staff would be the most impacted by a job rotation program and would have insight into the skills that could be gained from such a program and the problems in initiating one. Therefore, the second survey (Appendix B) was directed toward the staff and company officers with 10 potential respondents.

This survey requested employee opinions whether they thought Belton Emergency Services would benefit from the use of job rotation for succession planning or professional development of employees, and if so, what job classifications should be included and what skills would be desired of each class. Other questions included the frequency of rotation, whether rotations should be mandatory or voluntary, and what perceived benefits and problems would be produced.

The assumptions of this survey were that the respondents were knowledgeable about job rotation, and understood the survey questions.

The limitations of the survey were that there are differences in the experience and education of the members of the staff.

An unstructured interview was conducted with D. Meyers, Fire Chief, Overland Park, Kansas Fire Department. The purpose of the interview was to clarify information included in the survey.

Finally, this document was produced utilizing the fourth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

RESULTS

What is job rotation?

The literature search revealed that job rotation can be broadly or narrowly defined to meet an organizations needs and purpose.

Job rotation may range from as simple as Edwards (2005, p. 74) definition as “the process of switching a person from job to job” to rotation within a department, between departments of an organization, or even outside of an organization.

A wide variety of definitions were found in the literature ranging from simple, Edwards (2005), to more complex definitions, (International Labour Organization, 1998), HRDC (n.d. a, n.d. b, 1997), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (2004), Informal and Formal Training and Development (n.d.), OSHA (2003), the New Zealand public service (State Services Commission, 1999), and Malinski (2002).

A survey was conducted of departments in the Kansas City metropolitan area (Appendix A). Ten (69%) of sixteen departments responded with five (45%) reporting that job rotation was practiced within the department.

Although not requested to define job rotation, each department described the form of rotation conducted. Two departments reported rotation of intermediate chief officers between administrative and operational functions. One department reported a voluntary rotation from operational functions to training or fire prevention functions. Two departments report voluntary

assignments to perform work at the next pay classification or promotional rank (working out of class (WOC)) to cover for absences or vacancies.

These applications meet many of the definitions identified in the literature review.

How is job rotation being utilized by other organizations?

The literature review identified several models of utilization and frequency of use of job rotation.

Eriksson & Ortega (2004, p. 1) stated organizations introduce job rotation for three reasons, “employee learning, employer learning, and employee motivation.”

Guardiano, Haarmeyer, & Poole (1992) reported cross training personnel as firefighters and rescue technicians and rotating them through alternating assignments on a shift by shift basis.

The SSA’s, Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program provides rotational assignments as part of an IDP (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004).

Rohr (2000) and Stone (2001) documented various fire departments rotation of fire department command officers among department divisions and recommended the same.

Various utilization rates of job rotation were also found in the literature review.

A survey was conducted of departments in the Kansas City metropolitan area (Appendix A). Ten (69%) of sixteen departments responded with five (45%) reporting that job rotation was practiced within the department.

The five departments reporting the use job rotation report their utilization as follows. Two departments reported rotation of intermediate chief officers between administrative and operational functions. One department reported a voluntary rotation from operational functions to training or fire prevention functions. Two departments report voluntary assignments to

perform work at the next pay classification or promotional rank (working out of class (WOC)) to cover for absences or vacancies.

Only one department reported having a formal policy for job rotation which was included in the job description, and was for working out of class.

The three departments reporting rotation of intermediate chief officers, or rotation into prevention and training divisions, had staff sizes in excess of 100 uniformed personnel.

The Belton Emergency Services staff survey (Appendix B) resulted in six (60%) responses out of ten possible. Three (42%) of the respondents felt that job rotation could be utilized by the department, one commenting “There already is a type of job rotation in these positions that allow personnel to gain valuable experience in the form of working out of class.”

The remaining respondents felt that job rotation should be implemented at the Captain and Assistant Chief levels. They agreed that the Captains should be exposed to broader “nonsuppression” areas of department operations, but did not specify specific skills or objectives. They diverged on the whether the rotations should be mandatory or voluntary and the length of rotation, one versus two years.

For the Assistant Chief’s both agreed they should be exposed to broader aspects of department operations. One respondent commented, “Expansion of expertise and diversity of knowledge in areas outside of their comfort zones. Having AC's with a "internal" knowledge of how the different division's within the Department really works would benefit them. Providing them with this exposure helps in the decision making process with budgets, strategic planning and policies.”

How are other organizations benefiting from the use of job rotation?

The literature review revealed the following:

- An employee who rotates accumulates experience more quickly than an employee who does not rotate (Eriksson & Ortega, 2004, p. 3).
- An employee who rotates accumulates experience in more areas than an employee who does not rotate (Eriksson & Ortega, 2004, p. 3).
- An employee who rotates is competent in skills that are not necessarily performed in their normal duties making them more responsive when change is necessary (Jans & Frazier-Jans, 2001, p. 48).
- Rotation contributes to career satisfaction by sharing the “good” and “bad” assignments, and provides an organization the ability to rapidly fill vacancies (Jans & Frazier-Jans, 2001, p. 48).
- Job rotation produces innovation by improving an organizations ability to generate and respond to change. “Process style” innovations are produced because of workers knowledge of the overall relationship among tasks (Cosgel & Miceli, 1998, p. 3).
- Job rotation “provides an organizational overview, encourages interdepartmental cooperation, brings fresh viewpoints to otherwise stagnant sections of the organization, and it promotes flexibility” (Rohr, 2000, p. 20).
- Job rotation reduces “boredom, work stress, absenteeism, and turnover and...” increases “innovation, production, and loyalty” (Malinski, 2002, pp. 9).

The department survey identified the following benefits from departments using job rotation:

- Employees are “more well rounded.”

- “Suppression personnel obtain administrative experience. Administrative personnel receive field command opportunities.”
- “OT Cost savings, prep for next level”
- “The Assistant Chiefs have been more cohesive since they can better understand each other's jobs/duties/requirements.”

Belton Emergency Services staff expects the following benefits of job rotation:

- “Participants would develop a working knowledge of the department's overall operation that could be passed on through education and mentoring other departmental employees. In the absence of one individual, other individuals in the rotation would have the knowledge and abilities to fulfill duties and responsibilities. After a complete rotation of participants, most areas of concern or problem areas should have been addressed and more effective operations initiated.”
- “Working and learning from every one in the department.”
- “BES has a limited staff to select from and this proposal would allow the AC's to have better exposure to the demands and applications of each others job. It also, helps mentor and educate people for future promotional opportunities and ensure less down time when positions become available. Every organization is only as strong as it's weakest link. This type of proposal helps ensure that everyone can do a small portion of any job, so if someone is gone then the slack will not be as noticeable or a burden to the organization.”

- “If there were interested/qualified people rotating positions there could possibly be more people with a better understanding of the overall complexity of the operation.”

What are the risks and barriers of implementing a job rotation program for Belton Emergency Services?

The literature review identified several risks and barriers to job rotation including:

- Poaching of rotating personnel from the transferring office (State Services Commission, 1999, p. 15).
- The rotating employee would be reluctant to return to their original position after exposure new ideas or responsibilities (State Services Commission, 1999, p. 15).
- Managers could be reluctant to commit staff that they have trained (State Services Commission, 1999, p. 15).
- A lack of clarity in expectations reflecting poorly on the employee (State Services Commission, 1999, p. 15).
- Increased workload on remaining staff (State Services Commission, 1999, p. 15).
- Time spent bringing a person up to speed (State Services Commission, 1999, p. 15).
- Resistance by experienced staff (Malinski, 2002, pp. 10).
- Educating and training staff for new jobs (Malinski, 2002, pp. 10).
- Fitting the skill level of the staff with the job and pay structure (Malinski, 2002, pp. 10).
- The direct costs of implementation, and exposing untrained staff to hazardous situations in industrial settings (Malinski, 2002, pp. 10).

- Differences in skill levels among staff may be significant resulting in additional expense in upgrading staff or loss of productivity for some period (Malinski, 2002, pp. 10).
- A unionized environment may prohibit job rotation or restrict job rotation within particular job classifications (Cosgel & Miceli, 1998, p. 12) (Malinski, 2002, pp. 10).
- “This has to be an effective planned process. Employees must ‘buy’ into the idea, be encouraged to give feedback and make suggestions for improvement” (Informal and Formal Training and Development, n.d., pp. 15).

Departmental survey results identified the following:

- “Operations staff does not want to rotate into prevention or training divisions.”
- “Many in suppression do not want to move to administrative work, transitioning to 40 hour work week.”
- “When we have done it, it was not voluntary. That met with some resistance at the beginning due to family situations mostly. (changing from shift to 40 hr.)”
- “Change management process is being met with some resistance among some senior employees. An Article in the current Memorandum of Understanding with the Local has not been successful in filling our needs. Some believe this article to hinder normal growth as well as putting junior employees in job assignments that they do not have enough experiences to handle personnel and operations adequately.”

Fire Chief, D. Meyers (personal communication, January 12, 2005), of the Overland Park, Kansas Fire Department stated that while “job rotation is highly desirable, particularly for

personnel to transfer through training and prevention functions, it is almost impossible to find personnel working in suppression functions willing to do so. There is more camaraderie among personnel and the work schedule is more desirable to most people. In addition, the requirements of the prevention division have become more specialized with plan reviews and inspections that it requires several years for an individual learn those skills. If we cannot find personnel to rotate into these positions, we will hire replacements from the outside.”

Belton Emergency Services staff identified the following perceived problems:

- “Most of our personnel would not be willing to participate in the program. If it was made mandatory morale would drop even further. I would think the cost of training our personnel so that we could do a rotation would be high.”
- “I think that the concept of broad-based or "rounded" experience is an old, outdated management theory that has been proven ineffective. Today's most successful companies utilize the concept of allowing an employee that is good at something to get better at it. The best way for us to benefit from any tweaking of job assignments is to make sure that we have the best people assigned to the correct task, then giving them the tools they need to do their job, then getting out of their way and let them work. Don't get this opinion confused with not training and exposing each person to other duties, just don't plug them in somewhere and expect them to produce. We would benefit from so many things around here at this point (SOP's, goals, vision, strategic planning, etc) but this definitely isn't anywhere the top of my list of beneficial things we could put our efforts into.”
- “I think the problems are fairly obvious in that when you take two people that are doing a good job in their current assignment, then switch them, you run the risk of

ending up with two people not motivated to do much of anything. Rather than getting an increase in productivity that you'd planned, you end up lowering the overall productivity by double. Another example: you have a person in a position that isn't performing, and one that is. So you switch them, because of some policy that mandates a rotation every three years or whatever. Now, instead of just having one non-performer, you have a good chance of having two. I think that a better solution would be to hold the non-performer accountable; give them some specific objectives, and the consequences if they fail to meet them. If that happens, you move them into another position where they can be of benefit to the organization, then move someone into their role and give them their shot at it. If they are successful, and performing as you expect, you would be NUTS to remove them.”

- “Resistance and lack of buy-in. Participants would need to be educated on the benefits of the program and perks offered to overcome resistance and success of the program.”
- “Historically, shift AC's will be inclined to stay just as they are!!! Who doesn't want to work a shift? However, the good for the organization as a whole must be sold to the shift AC's. They must be lead to understand that the organizations worth is far more important, than their own personal agendas. Crews will also be reculant to have different AC's. However, i believe that this helps make the Company Officer a bigger influencer upon the crews and for the organization. We want them to be the person in charge of daily company operations and this helps them accept responsibilities, because they are the new trust factor for the

shift personnel. There would be a need to ensure that all AC's involved with the rotation would get equal training in the various areas they would be in. This would need to be accomplished prior to the rotations beginning. AC's in non-suppression areas would need reviews or classes in IMS and tactics. Shift AC's would need to attain certifications in Instructor and Inspector areas. Over all, I would support this type of proposal, but based on the current personnel with the organization, I truly believe that it would have little if any chance of success."

- "The potential exist to have people in positions that A. they are not and may never be qualified for or B. they are not interested in. In either case this would be detrimental to the overall operation, especially the suppression side. For this reason alone I think a rotation program could be a risky proposition. If there were individuals who were interested in certain aspects such as clothing or investigations as an example and they could agree on a rotation then that type of situation may work."
- "I think a job rotation program would hurt the morale around here by placing people where they may not want to be. It could also raise one's stress level by moving them from a position that they have gotten comfortable with. If you place people in a position that best fits them and where they can excel it benefits the department and everyone."

DISCUSSION

It is clear from this research that job rotation is broadly defined to meet the needs of organizations. The principle forms of job rotation utilized in the Kansas City metropolitan area

are working out of class arrangements, and the rotation of intermediate chief officers between administrative and operations functions.

The utilization of job rotation of 45% in the Kansas City metropolitan area appears to be consistent with the rates found in the literature. 55.5% in 1997 (Cohen, Dickens, & Posen, 2001, p. 36), 41% of organizations in 2002 (Campbell-Allen & Welch, 2004, p. 5), 40% of the businesses in the United Kingdom 1999 (Kitson & Wilkinson, 1999, p. 4), and 44% of the New Zealand Public Service in 1999 (State Services Commission, 1999, p. 14).

This researcher believes that the use of working out of class arrangements are more prevalent than reported and would raise the rate of utilization if this data were obtained.

If these forms of job rotation are eliminated from the results, the utilization of job rotation drops to 20%, below the expected rate of utilization.

The reporting departments rotating intermediate chief officers have staff levels in excess of 100 members, therefore this may be a reflection of Eriksson & Ortega's statement that the "likelihood of job rotation increases with firm size..."(2004, p. 16).

Six of the reporting departments have staff levels in excess of 100. When the data is restricted to this demographic, the utilization rate becomes 30%.

Belton Emergency Services does not fall within this demographic; therefore department size may be a significant barrier to implementation of a job rotation program involving intermediate chief officers.

Forty-two percent (42%) of Belton Emergency Services staff felt that job rotation would benefit the department, exclusive of the working out of class arrangement.

The benefits of job rotation experienced by the reporting departments and Belton Emergency Services staff are consistent with those identified in the literature search.

The risks and barriers to job rotation identified by the literature search were quite lengthy. The primary barriers identified by the departmental survey were from departments currently utilizing job rotation. These barriers primarily consisted of the socio-economic impact of the rotation on the staff affected. This primarily affected departments rotating intermediate chief officers, however, even departments utilizing working out of class arrangements identified issues of personnel qualifications.

Belton Emergency Services staff identified many risks and barriers to the implementation of such a program. This is not surprising, because the implementation of a job rotation program must "...be an effective planned process. Employees must 'buy' into the idea, be encouraged to give feedback and make suggestions for improvement" (Informal and Formal Training and Development, n.d., pp. 15) and they would be most affected by the implementation of a program of this nature. At this time, a majority of the staff would not "buy" into a job rotation program.

Belton Emergency Services serves a community experiencing rapid growth and the staff is stretched to deliver programs and services. Temporary or permanent productivity reductions identified by the staff survey would be a significant barrier to implementation of a job rotation program. This may be a significant reason staff officer rotation is not seen in departments of less than 100 personnel.

In summary, job rotation has the potential to provide many benefits to Belton Emergency Services for future development of personnel and providing leaders for the department. A working out of class arrangement already offers personnel to function at higher levels and gain exposure to the requirements of those positions.

Expansion of job rotation to the rotation of Assistant Chief officers and/or Captains face significant barriers to implementation.

Social and economic factors resulting from changing work shifts, lack of staff “buy-in,” limited staff size, and reductions in staff productivity are significant barriers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear Belton Emergency Services is not ready to implement a job rotation program beyond the working out of class program currently in place.

Employee “buy-in” will be a major hurdle. Informal and Formal Training and Development stated, “This has to be an effective planned process. Employees must ‘buy’ into the idea, be encouraged to give feedback and make suggestions for improvement” (n.d., pp. 15). This is a process personnel will need to participate in perhaps through labor-management or other committee.

Other incentives need to be explored to overcome resistance to social and economic factors of shift change. These should be identified through the planning process.

The planning process should identify and quantify potential losses in productivity and identify compensatory mechanisms. This may result in additional costs such as training and overtime. Evaluate the cost versus the expected benefits.

Department size is not a hurdle easily overcome. It may be that the cost/benefit ratio is lower for larger departments. If this obstacle cannot be overcome, other avenues of professional development should receive consideration.

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APPENDIX A

BELTON EMERGENCY

Steven F. Holle • Fire Chief

December 26, 2004

Dear Chief,

As the Fire Chief for the City of Belton and a student in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP), I am conducting an applied research project for my last class, *Executive Leadership*.

I intend to evaluate the use of job rotation in the fire service with emphasis on succession planning or professional development.

The survey consists primarily of short answer questions. Please feel free to elaborate on your answers.

Please complete the survey and return by Friday, January 7, 2005.

Thank you for your participation in this project. The survey results will be available upon request.

Sincerely,

Steven F. Holle
sholle@belton.org
beltonfd@swbell.net
sholle@kc.rr.com

APPENDIX B

Job Rotation Survey

(Click in the appropriate box to place an 'X' by your answer. Text fields will allow an unlimited amount of text, for short answer questions. Use the "Save As" function, then the document can be returned as an attachment using the "Send as attachment" function to sholle@belton.org or sholle@kc.rr.com)

Department Name:

No. of Members:

☐ Career ☐ Combination ☐ Volunteer

Does your department utilize job rotation for professional development of personnel or succession planning? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered, "Yes" to the question, please continue.

What job classifications are included in job rotation?

- ☐ Firefighter/EMT/EMT-P
- ☐ Company Officer
- ☐ Intermediate Chief Officer
- ☐ Deputy Chief
- ☐ Other

Have specific objectives or skills been identified personnel are expected to achieve or gain from the job rotation experience?

Skills?

Firefighter/EMT/EMT-P	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Company Officer	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Intermediate Chief Officer	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Deputy Chief	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

Does your department have written policies regarding job rotation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is job rotation a mandatory or voluntary assignment? ☐ Mandatory ☐ Voluntary

How frequent are rotations scheduled?

How has your department benefited from job rotation?

What problems have been experienced with job rotation?

APPENDIX C



BELTON EMERGENCY

Steven F. Holle • Fire Chief

December 26, 2004

Dear Personnel,

I am studying job rotation for my applied research project for the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP).

I intend to evaluate the use of job rotation in the fire service with emphasis on succession planning or professional development.

The survey consists primarily of short answer questions. Please feel free to elaborate on your answers.

Please complete the survey and return by Friday, January 7, 2005.

Thank you for your participation in this project. The survey results will be available upon request.

Sincerely,

Steven F. Holle
Fire Chief
sholle@belton.org
beltonfd@swbell.net
sholle@kc.rr.com

APPENDIX D

Job Rotation Survey

(Click in the appropriate box to place an 'X' by your answer. Text fields will allow an unlimited amount of text, for short answer questions. Use the "Save As" function, then the document can be returned as an attachment using the "Send as attachment" function to sholle@belton.org or sholle@kc.rr.com)

Would Belton Emergency Services benefit from personnel job rotation for professional development of personnel or succession planning? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What job classifications or functions should be included in job rotation?

- ☐ Firefighter/EMT/EMT-P
- ☐ Captain
- ☐ Assistant Chief

What specific objectives or skills should personnel be expected to achieve or gain from the job rotation experience?

Objectives/Skills?

Firefighter/EMT/EMT-P
Captain
Assistant Chief

Should job rotation be a mandatory or voluntary assignment? ☐ Mandatory ☐ Voluntary

How frequent should rotations be scheduled?

How do you feel Belton Emergency Services would benefit from job rotation?

What problems would you expect with a job rotation program?